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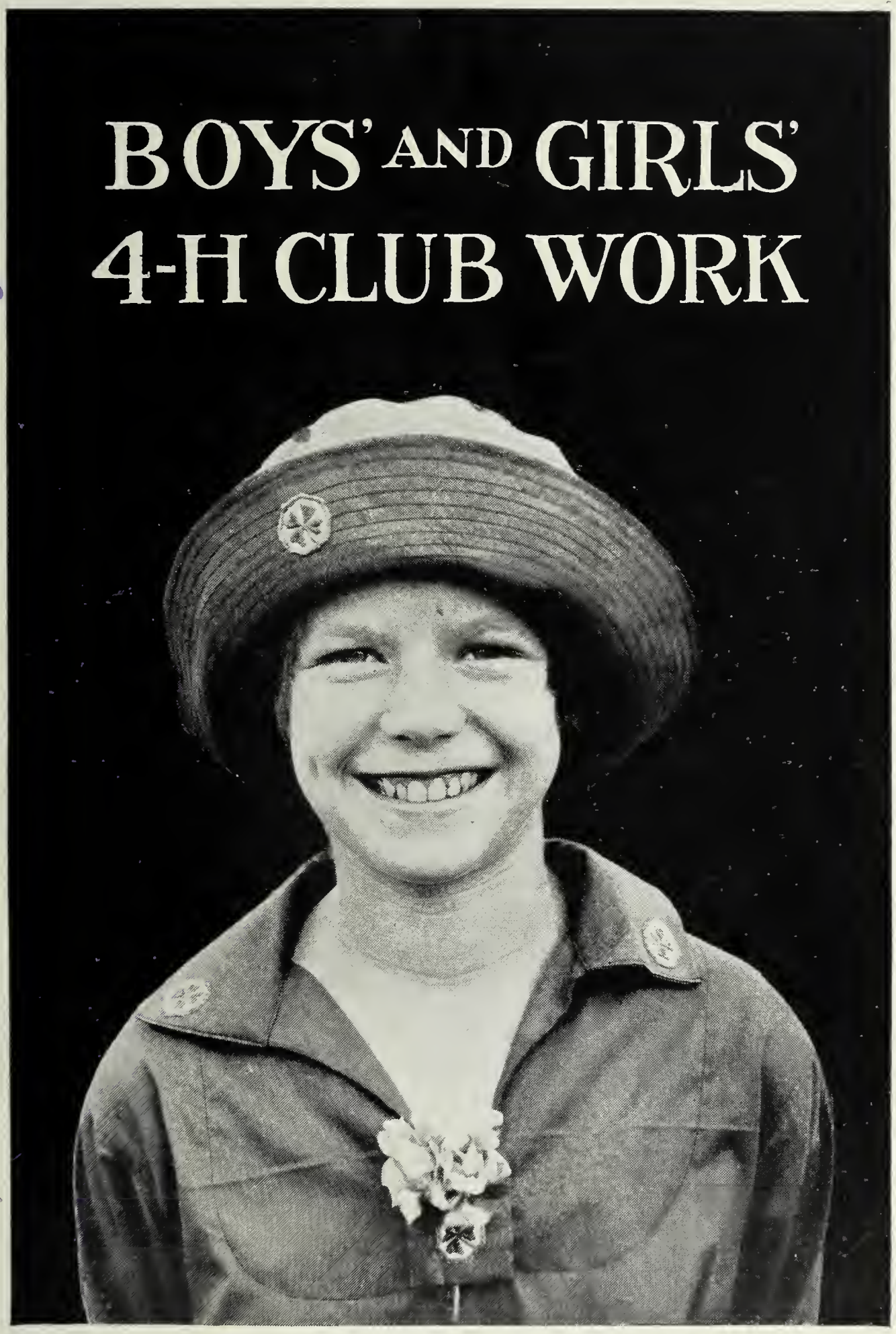
BOYS' AND GIRLS' 4-H CLUB WORK



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

MISCELLANEOUS CIRCULAR No. 77

WASHINGTON, D. C. OCTOBER, 1926

BOYS' AND GIRLS' 4-H CLUB WORK

By C. B. Smith, *Chief, Office of Cooperative Extension Work*

THE OBJECT OF CLUB WORK

The United States Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges are charged, under the Smith-Lever Act and in appropriations to the United States Department of Agriculture, with the task of teaching improved practices and standards in agriculture and home economics to rural people. The end sought is an efficient agri-

Fig. 1.—Members of a 4–H pig club conducting a demonstration. Club members put into practice improved methods and explain the work to their elders

culture, an adequate food and clothing supply, an enriched country life, and an alert, satisfied, progressive rural people.

The task placed upon the department and the colleges is essentially an educational one and continuous. It is recognized that when the State has an educational duty to perform it is in accord with good teaching principles to begin with the youth of the country, rather than wait till they reach maturity.

Note.—This statement on 4–H club work has been prepared at the request of the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges.

To this end, boys' and girls' 4–H club work has been organized throughout the United States. This club work constitutes a part of the national agricultural extension system, by means of which instruction in agriculture and home economics is given to rural boys and girls by the United States Department of Agriculture, the land-grant colleges, and local agencies cooperating. The instruction is given by means of farm, home, and community demonstrations and club activities, carried on by the young people themselves (fig. 1), for the purpose (1) of helping country boys and girls to improve rural farm and home practices and the social life of their own communities, (2) of showing them the possibilities of rural life, (3) of aiding those who so desire to become efficient farmers and home

FIG. 2.—County agent demonstrating field selection of seed corn to club members

makers, and (4) of teaching rural boys and girls how to make of themselves public-spirited, useful citizens and leaders in rural affairs.

WHAT CLUB WORK IS

The outstanding characteristic of 4–H club work is that each member conducts a substantial piece of work, designed to show some better practice on the farm or in the home or community; keeps a record of results; explains the work to others; and makes a final report on the work. Typical lines of club work are: Growing an acre or more of cotton in accordance with the directions of the agricultural college, raising a sow and litter of pigs according to instructions, growing fruits and vegetables in accordance with the dietary needs of the family, canning the surplus in the most approved ways, and other phases of farm and home work that especially appeal to young people.

Another characteristic of 4–H club work is that each line of work carried on by a club member is intended to meet some farm, home, individual, or community need and is designed as a part of the general agricultural and home-economics extension program of the community. The club member thus feels that he or she is doing a worth-while, needed piece of work and that his or her efforts are of importance. (Fig. 2.)

The work is carried on with boys and girls 10 to 20 years of age, usually through groups of 10 to 20 members. Most of these groups are organized as clubs with a president, secretary, and other officers, and an adult leader or sponsor. They meet from time to time, conduct their meeting along parliamentary lines, have a program in

FIG. 3.—Club member demonstrating the making of bread

which the progress of their respective lines of work is presented and discussed, give demonstrations, sing songs, play games, practice yells, and carry on like matters of interest to young people.

Boys' and girls' club work is voluntary, centering around living things like growing plants or animals, or concerned with the active processes of home making, farm accounting, or other matters related directly to the daily life of the farm and the farm home. The study of books is incidental and supplemental to the actual planting, growing, harvesting, and marketing of the crop, the rearing and marketing of livestock, or the actual preparation of food, making of clothes, or the furnishing of a room in the house. The work is not of the classroom or laboratory but is conducted out of doors in the fields, the orchards, the barns, or in the home, the creamery, or the market place.

Club work is learning by doing. It is in accord with the theory that the large majority of human beings learn primarily by observa-

tion and the apprenticeship method. (Fig. 3.) The actual growing of the crop in club work or the raising of stock is directed and supervised by some experienced man or woman or older club member who is trained by the extension agent and knows how the thing ought to be done and can tell something of the reasons why.

Club members are urged to make an exhibit of the products they have grown or made at local, county, and State fairs. They are taught how to judge quality in such exhibits. Many are trained in putting on demonstrations and explaining their work to the public. They keep records of their efforts as to time spent, materials used, costs, and the like, report progress at club meetings, and make a final

FIG. 4.—County extension agent explaining how to keep records of demonstrations. Club members record the time spent, materials used, and costs, report progress at club meetings, and make a final written report to their leader

written report to their leader summarizing their whole season's activities. (Fig. 4.) The work is an educational process, dealing not so much with books as with the things out of which books are made. It is doing something rather than learning about doing something.

The members of the local club come in contact not only with their leaders, who know how to do things, but with the work of one another, in which there frequently are rivalry and contest, and with the public in field meetings and in exhibits at fairs, festivals, and demonstrations. From time to time they meet with the trained teachers and educators of the agricultural colleges and of the Federal Department of Agriculture, with business men and outstanding farmers—all leaders in different lines of work, men and women of

capacity and vision who inspire by their accomplishments and outlook. (Fig. 5.) The club members frequently are given a larger view of life, also, through opportunity to attend instructional camps and short courses conducted by the State agricultural colleges, from a few days to a week in duration in the counties, and once or twice a year at the agricultural college itself. All these various contacts with men and problems and the affairs of life serve to awaken youth and to stimulate the desire to do and accomplish.

WHAT CLUB WORK DOES

4–H club work has enrolled in it more than 565,000 rural boys and girls in the United States who are organized into about 41,000

FIG. 5.—Congratulating a club girl on her prize-winning baby beef. Club members gain a wider outlook through frequent contact with educators, prominent farmers, business men, and other leaders in the State and community

clubs. In many States considerable numbers of boys and girls are enrolled who do the demonstration work but are not in local clubs. They report directly to the county extension agent.

The particular value of club work is that it gets hold of young people while their minds are plastic and gives them guidance when they need it, teaches them some of the inspiring things in agriculture, and gives them vision of its possibilities as a life job. It provides opportunity for them to share home responsibilities in keeping with their ability and gives them a part in solving the problems of rural communities. Club work brings extension agencies close to young

people, since its appeal is based on working with them on things that have and hold their interest. It trains them in conducting meetings in an orderly way, carrying on team demonstrations, earning money, and acquiring property. It teaches them how to work together, counsel together, play together, cooperate, and achieve. (Fig. 6.) One of the greatest needs of rural people to-day is greater cooperation among themselves. Club work trains in such cooperation.

Boys' and girls' club work is demonstrating better practices in agriculture and home economics, and what is thus being demonstrated is finding its way into the lives of rural people. Surveys in nearly a dozen widely scattered States show that at least two out of each five

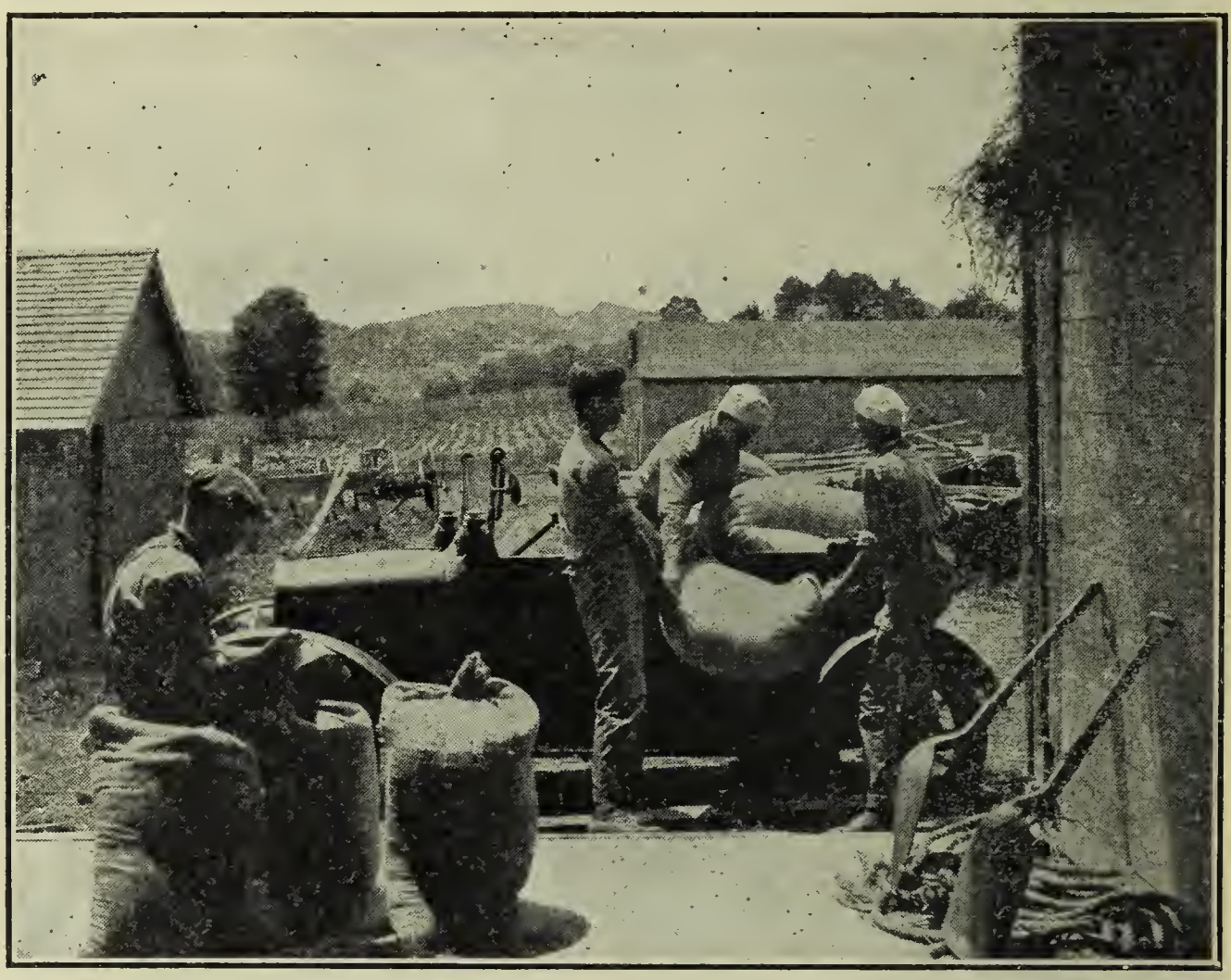

FIG. 6.—Members of a 4–H poultry club checking out feed that was purchased and mixed cooperatively

farms on which juniors conduct demonstrations adopt into the regular practices of the farm and home some of the things thus demonstrated.

Club work develops rural leadership. Not only is it finding and giving training at present to 47,995 local leaders of boys' and girls' clubs, but it is discovering and developing future rural leaders from among the club members themselves. It is developing men and women who, through the club training, know how to put on demonstrations, conduct a meeting, organize a committee, put on a short course, manage an extension tour, hold field meetings, set up an exhibit, and judge crops, livestock, and other products of the farm and home. (Fig. 7.)

As a phase of extension work, 4–H clubs serve a distinctly useful purpose in bringing people in contact with cooperative extension work while they are yet young, so that when they later operate farms and farm homes for themselves they will know the sources of agricultural and home-economics information and help and will have faith in them.

Club work emphasizes the home. The practical work of the club—the demonstration—is usually at the home. Club work brings parents and children increasingly together in a common interest.

Club work likewise brings rural young men and women in contact with the best practices and finer things in agriculture and the home, developing in them the right attitude and sympathy toward farm

FIG. 7.—Representatives of local clubs in session at the county courthouse. Boys and girls, through club work, learn how to conduct meetings, organize committees, manage extension tours, set up exhibits, make demonstrations, and judge farm products

work and the open country and giving them faith in the industry, pride of occupation, and vision of the possibilities of rural life.

Club work has the further quality of interesting and bringing under its influence the boys and girls out of school as well as the boys and girls in school. It thus serves as a means of continuing education and guidance to those who, through lack of interest or necessity, have dropped out of school.

Probably one of the most valuable things club work does is to bring boys and girls into responsible contact with the live problems of the community and, through having them do something on the farm or in the home that is worth while, to get them in touch with inspiring men and women who may encourage them to finish school, to go on to college, or otherwise to fit themselves better for life's work.

Setting out the characteristics of the 4–H club work in a condensed, positive way, the things 4–H club boys and girls do may be stated as follows:

(1) 4–H club boys and girls are demonstrators—they learn and teach better ways on the farm, in the home, and in the community.
(2) 4–H club boys and girls work, earn money, and acquire property.
(3) 4–H club boys and girls do the needful, the wholesome, the helpful thing.
(4) 4–H club boys and girls play the game fairly.
(5) 4–H club boys and girls meet together, work together, play together, cooperate, achieve.
(6) 4–H club boys and girls build up their bodies and their health through right living; they train their hands to be useful, their minds to think clearly; their hearts are kind.
(7) 4–H club boys and girls have high ideals and standards.
(8) 4–H club boys and girls are doers.

THE CLUB PROBLEM

There are about 11,000,000 rural boys and girls 10 to 18 years of age [1] in the United States, of whom approximately 6,000,000 are on the farms of the open country. Of the 11,000,000, about 565,000, or approximately 1 in 20, were enrolled in club work in 1925 (fig. 8). Such studies as have been made seem to indicate that the average period of continuance in club work is one and three-fourths years, though considerable numbers stay in the work four or five years and then continue in it as local club leaders.

Those charged with the responsibility of encouraging club enrollment and developing and conducting club work are the approximately 2,300 county agricultural agents, the about 1,000 home demonstration agents, the 140 county club agents, and the supervisory officials of these groups in the cooperative extension system. The statistics for 1925 show that each county agricultural agent or assistant agent reporting enrolled an average of about 119 club members; each home demonstration agent or assistant reporting, 196 members; and each county club agent, 507 members.

Of the average of 119 club members enrolled by the county agricultural agent per county in 1925, 71, or 60 per cent, completed the work; of the 196 enrolled by the home demonstration agent, 98, or 50 per cent, completed the year's work; and of the 507 enrolled by the county club agent, 378, or 75 per cent, completed the year's work. The county club agent giving his or her whole time to club work is thus seen to have enrolled in 1925 more than four times as many members as the county agricultural agent and to have brought more than five times as many through to completion; to have enrolled two and one-half times as many as the home demonstration agent and to have brought about four times as many to completion of the year's work. Or, to state the matter in another way, the county club agent enrolled an average of one and six-tenths times as many club members in 1925 as the county agricultural agent and home demonstration agent combined and brought through to completion two and two-tenths times as many as both these agents combined.

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[1] Although 4–H club work is carried on with boys and girls 10 to 20 years of age, census figures could only be obtained for the number of rural boys and girls 10 to 18 years old.

These data have a bearing on the national club problem, some questions relative to which may be stated in part as follows: Has boys' and girls' 4–H club work sufficient value from the standpoint of (1) teaching better practices in agriculture and home economics, (2) developing the boy and girl who take part in the work, and (3) developing rural leadership, to warrant its further expansion?

Should the advantages of club work be brought to the attention of every rural boy and girl in the United States and each encouraged to enroll and take part in it? Should the club work be looked upon not only as an agency for promoting better agricultural and home-economics practices, but also, because of its educational value, as a definite part of the Nation's educational system? If it will hold the boy or girl longer in school or get hold of the boy and girl out of

FIG. 8.—In 1925 club work aroused the interest of 565,000 boys and girls in farming, developed pride of occupation, and gave them faith in the possibilities of rural life

school and give to them some further training and guidance, shall this fact not be taken into consideration in the education of our rural youth?

The data seem to show that many young people from 14 to 20 who for one reason or another have dropped out of school can be and are interested and enrolled in club work and can be and are thus brought under educational and helpful influences. Many of them are thus directed back into school or encouraged to go on to college or stimulated to take a larger part in community affairs, better farming, home making, and matters of good citizenship (fig. 9).

Statistics for 1920 show an average of 960 rural and country-town boys and girls between 10 and 18 years of age—mostly between 14 and 18—out of school in each rural county in the United States.

Many of these are potential farm and home demonstrators. Many are going to become farmers and home makers; many will drift unless guided. Shall the Nation not expand its extension and educational program and give this group some helpful guidance in their time of need? This should not be done, of course, at the expense of those in school, but should constitute an additional effort to develop our citizenship beyond the schoolroom.

To state the matter more concretely: If the community and State find it advantageous to employ a teacher for each 30 to 50 pupils in school, may it not find it advantageous to employ at least one full-time extension agent to work with the 960 boys and girls per average county who are out of school? Or again, each rural county employs an average of 125 to 150 rural teachers to instruct the boys and girls

FIG. 9.—Group of club girls in college. 4–H club work encourages boys and girls to finish school, to go to college, or otherwise to fit themselves better for life

in school. May it not be profitable to employ even two or three more agents—extension teachers—teachers of a new kind—for the 960 out of school, now that a way has been found of interesting and instructing many of them?

A NATIONAL 4–H CLUB PROGRAM

Based on the preceding discussion, what shall our national aims be? May we not predicate a national club program, with definite goals toward which to work, along some such lines as the following:

Boys' and girls' club work should be substantially expanded. It should be made possible for every rural boy and girl in the United States between the ages of 10 and 20 desiring it to receive the benefits of club work.

No young farmer or farmer's wife should come to their task of farming and home making without having had opportunity in their youth to come in personal contact with extension work. They should have come up through the club system. (Fig. 10.)

At least two age groups, a younger and an older, should be consciously recognized in club work and the work organized to meet the needs of each of these groups.

The period of continuance in club work should be increased from its present average of one and three-fourths years to a minimum of three years.

To meet this situation, the extension service of the land-grant colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture should be so expanded as to provide a county agricultural agent and home demonstration agent for every rural county of the United States having as many as 1,000 farms, or 1,000 children of club age. Each county agricultural agent and home demonstration agent should be encouraged to carry on club work to the full extent of the present average enrollment and completions.

FIG. 10.—Club girls learning to judge a garment. All farm boys and girls should have the opportunity of benefiting from club training

Assistant agents should be provided as the number of farms and young people of club age increase. Normally a county with as many as 1,500 farms, or 1,500 children of club age, should be given the full time of at least one man or woman, devoting full time to boys' and girls' club work, in addition to what is done by the county agricultural agent and home demonstration agent.

The assistant county extension agent or the club agent should be placed in the county as soon as the people want such help.

In order to reach as many as 65 per cent of the rural boys and girls of whom there are an average of 3,600 per rural county, between the ages of 10 and 18, and keep them in club work for a minimum of 2 years during that 8-year period, it is necessary to enroll an average of at least 600 members annually per county. If it is desired to

secure the benefits of club work to all rural boys and girls, an average enrollment of 900 per county annually is necessary.

The effort should be made to organize the children into groups with an adult in charge of each group, though when this is not practicable individuals may be enrolled who report directly to the county extension agents or, in rare cases, to the State club leader direct. (Fig. 11.) It is through the group organization, however, that cooperation and parliamentary practice are best learned, enthusiasm developed, interest maintained, and the greatest benefits derived by both young people and public.

Rural development is probably greatest, more native leadership brought into the work, and more boys and girls who have dropped

FIG. 11.—A local leader demonstrating culling to a 4–H poultry club. Cooperation and interest are best maintained and the greatest benefits derived when the young people are organized into a group with an adult in charge

out of school interested when the club work is organized outside of the regular school system. The interested and informed layman makes a better local leader, usually, than the country-school teacher who already has a full-time job. Club work should be looked upon as an activity in addition to and complementary to our rural schools. It should not be made mandatory.

The club program should be a part of, or harmonize with, the regular cooperative agricultural and home-economics extension program of the community. It should be remembered that the rural boy and girl frequently constitute as much of a rural problem as do crops and livestock, and efforts in their behalf, leading to the teaching of better cooperation and a more intelligent, helpful, and constructive interest in rural welfare and greater contentment in rural life, are justifiable objectives in cooperative extension work.

Elbert Hubbard states:

> We are all fools until we know
> That in the common plan
> Nothing is worth the making
> If it does not make the man.
> Why build these temples glorious
> If man unbuilded goes?
> We build the world in vain
> Unless the builder grows.

So far as practicable, boys and girls should be given a voice in the development of the extension program which they are to carry out. To an increasing degree the older members should be made delegates to meetings at which community and county extension programs are determined upon.

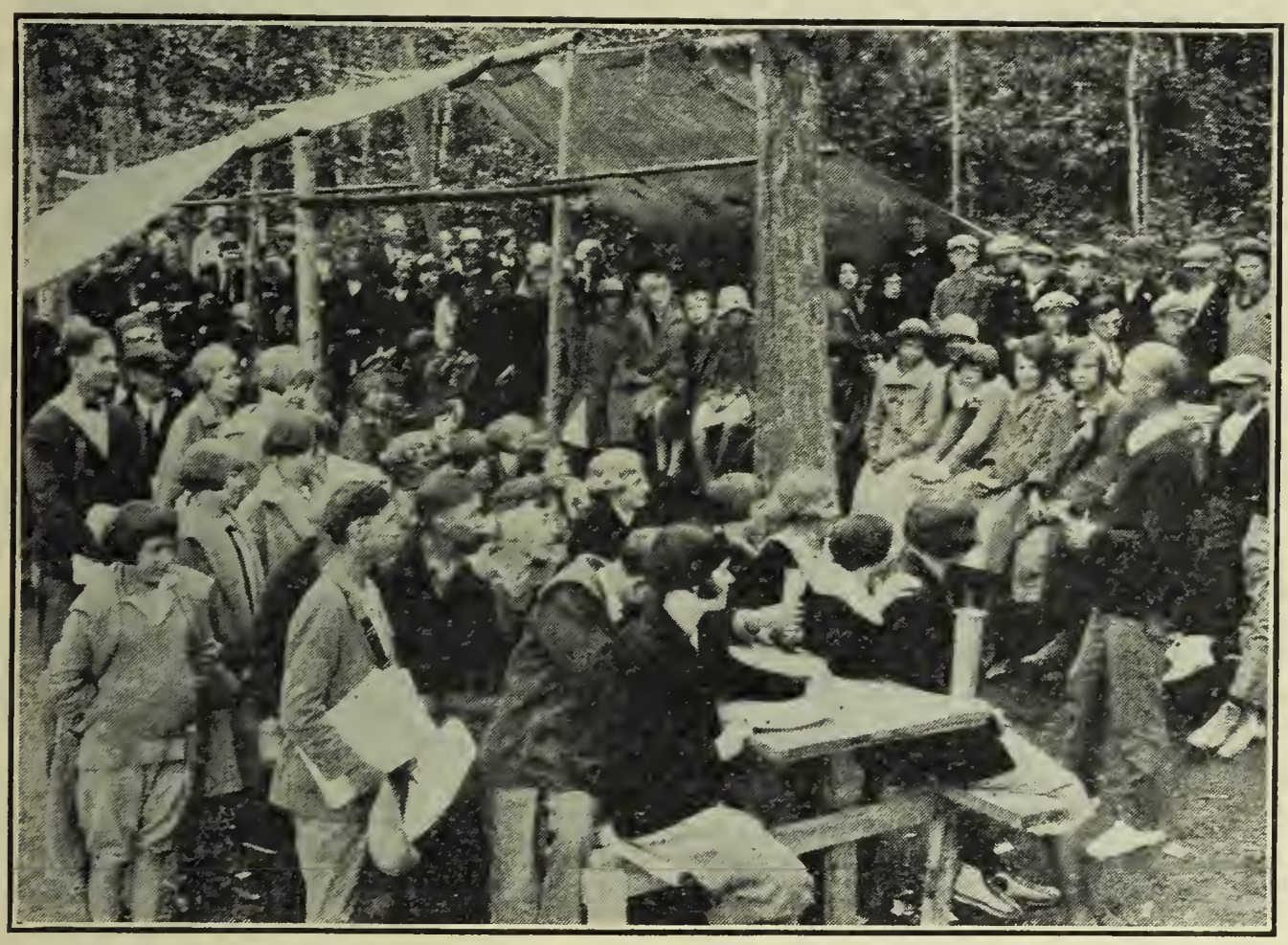

FIG. 12.—Boys and girls at a 4–H club camp being addressed by their leader. Club camps are held in most States to provide recreation, give training, and develop leadership

Systematic attention should be given to providing suitable extension activities for the large numbers of young people who for various reasons may not be members of organized clubs, in order that they may be given some instruction and guidance and be brought into contact with the cooperative extension service. It is believed that such activities will do much to bring about a greater spread of influence of club work, and be a means of interesting many young people in organized extension work.

Four–H club work is a public enterprise, administered with public funds, supervised by public officials, and should be maintained wholly in the public interest. Donations to club work should be primarily for establishing scholarships, educational trips, or other like awards.

Short-course scholarship and eligibility to attend 4–H club camps should be recognized as proper and stimulating prizes in club work.

Both State and National club camps are desirable. (Fig. 12.) They give training, develop leadership, promote comradeship and morale, and give vision. Those who attend should be old enough and competent enough to profit from it and to carry back to their respective communities the message of the camp.

Inasmuch as studies in the efficiency of local leadership show that those local leaders who attend training meetings are practically twice as efficient in reaching people and getting new practices adopted as are those who receive no training, the extension system should provide systematically for such training. (Fig. 13.)

Such special instruction at the agricultural college should be offered as will fit students, upon graduation, for this work of dealing

FIG. 13.—A meeting to give local leaders special training for club work in their communities

with juniors. Additional instruction should also be offered county extension agents already in the field so that they may carry on their club work more efficiently. Increasingly the effort should be made to utilize the graduates of Smith-Hughes and agricultural high schools as local leaders in club work.

Since club work is having such a marked effect on the Nation's agriculture and rural home life and substantial sums are being expended in its promotion, constant studies should be made of the efficiency and value of the different agencies involved in promoting club work and of the methods used in developing and expanding it and making it more efficient. Club work has come as a new and vitalizing factor in the Nation's agricultural and educational system and is worthy of much wider development.

SUMMARY

Club work is a part of the Nation's agricultural extension system and promoted by the State agricultural colleges, United States Department of Agriculture, county governments, and rural people cooperating.

Every member who takes part demonstrates some better farm, home, or community practice.

Club work promotes agriculture and home economics and develops boys and girls.

There were 565,000 enrolled members in 1925, and they put on more demonstrations in corn and potato growing, gardening, food preparation, clothing, beef, swine, and poultry raising than did the adults.

Only a part of the 11,000,000 rural boys and girls has opportunity to take part in this teaching and self-development work. The work should be so expanded that all who want to may take part in it and receive helpful guidance.

Club work offers one more chance for reaching the boys and girls who, for one reason or another, have dropped out of school and giving them instruction and helpful guidance. It is a very helpful supplement, also, to school work in retaining the interest of children in school.

Club work teaches by doing.

Through its organized club and team work it teaches boys and girls how to cooperate and work together. These are among the biggest needs of rural life.

County agents and home demonstration agents should be encouraged to do even more boys' and girls' club work and whenever, with their other work, they are unequal to the task, they should be given an assistant agent or club agent to give full time to club work.

Many fathers and mothers are concerned because their boy or girl at 14, 15, or 16 has dropped out of school. Club work should make a special effort to interest and influence this group out of school, as well as the group in school.

And all this because: 4–H club boys and girls are doers. They are taught high ideals and standards. They meet together, work together, play together, cooperate, achieve. They play the game fairly. They demonstrate, work, earn money, and acquire property. They learn and teach the better way on the farm, in the home, and in the community. They build up their bodies and their health through right living. They train their hands to be useful, their minds to think clearly, and their hearts to be kind.

ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

September 20, 1926

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